REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-11 are presently active in this case, Claims 1, 2, 6, 7, and 9 having been amended and Claims 10 and 11 having been added by way of the present Amendment.

In the outstanding Official Action, Claims 1-9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Akui et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,715,360). For the reasons discussed below, the Applicant requests the withdrawal of the anticipation rejection.

In the Office Action, the Akui et al. reference is indicated as anticipating each of Claims 1-9. However, the Applicant notes that a claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claims is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference. *Verdegaal Bros. v. Union Oil Co. of California*, 2 USPQ2d 1051, 1053 (Fed. Cir. 1987). As will be demonstrated below, the Akui et al. reference clearly does not meet each and every limitation of the independent Claim 1.

Claim 1 of the present application recites a valved plug including, among other features, a main body portion internally formed with a constricted passage, and a nesting piece adapted to be detachably and tightly coupled with the main body portion and having a normally closed slit valve in axial alignment with the constricted passage. The main body portion is provided with an interlocking inward projection of a predetermined thickness at an outer end to be coupled with the nesting piece, and the nesting piece is provided with an annular interlocking groove around an outer periphery thereof. The interlocking groove is narrower than the predetermined thickness of the interlocking projection and adapted to

engage with the interlocking projection tightly from upper, lower and inner sides to hold the interlocking projection in a compressed state. The Applicant respectfully submits that the Akui et al. reference does not disclose all of the above limitations.

The Akui et al. reference describes an endoscope 10 that includes an operation section 12, an insertion section 14 extending out of the operation section 12, and a universal cord 16 extending from the operation section 12. The operation section 12 is provided with an insertion mouthpiece 22 having an insertion port 23. The mouthpiece 22 is fitted with a forceps stopcock 28 that includes a round cylindrical body 30, a cap 32 and a coupling member 34. The cylindrical body 30 has an upper engagement section member 38 with which the cap 32 is detachably meshed. The upper engagement section 38 includes an annular flange 40 projecting radially inward from the upper end inner periphery of the cylindrical body 30 and an annular groove 42 formed below the annular flange 40.

The cylindrical body 30 includes a valve section 44 having an annular pushing member 48 projecting upward. The upper surface of the pushing member 48 acts as a pressing plane 49. The pushing member 48 is formed coaxially with the insertion port 23 and is set substantially opposite to the shoulder section 43 of the upper engagement section 38.

The cap 32 has an outer diameter that is substantially equal to the inner diameter of the annular flange 40 of the upper engagement section 38. The upper periphery of the cap 32 is provided with a flange 50 which projects radially outward. The lower periphery of the cap 32 is provided with a flange 52 which also projects radially outward. The outer diameter of the flange 52 is made equal to the diameter of the annular groove 42 of the upper engagement section 38. While the cap 32 is meshed with the upper engagement section 38 of the

cylindrical body 30, the flange 52 is meshed with the annular groove 42 of the upper engagement section 38, and the upper edge of the flange 52 is meshed with the shoulder section 43. Under this condition, the underside of the flange 52 is pressed against the pressing plane 49 of the pushing member 48.

The Akui et al. reference does not disclose an interlocking groove that is narrower than the predetermined thickness of the interlocking projection and adapted to engage with the interlocking projection tightly from upper, lower and inner sides to hold the interlocking projection in a compressed state, as expressly recited in Claim 1 of the present application. The recess between flange 50 and flange 52 in the Akui et al. reference is clearly not narrower than the thickness of flange 40, as is clearly evident from a review of the figures of the Akui et al. reference. Thus, the recess between flange 50 and flange 52 is clearly not adapted to engage with the flange 40 tightly from upper, lower and inner sides to hold the flange 40 in a compressed state.

By way of illustration and not limitation, the embodiment of the present invention depicted in Figure 2 includes an interlocking projection 26 and an interlocking groove 31 that are tightly engaged with each other to hold the valved nesting piece 21 securely in a locked state within the main body 20 of the plug. To the contrary, in the Akui et al. reference the cap 32 is stopped in the cylindrical body 30 by engaging a flange 40 on the side of the cylindrical body 30 with a flange 52 on the side of the cap 32. The flanges 40 and 52 are held in the engaged state by a pushing member 48 with a pressing plane 49. However, in the configuration described and depicted in the Akui et al. reference, empty spaces exist under the flange 52, and between flange 50 and flange 40. Therefore, the flange 52 on the cap 32

can be deformed toward the lower space, thereby disengaging the cap 32 from the flange 30 on the inside of the cylindrical body 30.

In contrast, the present invention provides an interlocking projection 26 and an interlocking groove 31 that are tightly engaged with each other to hold the valved nesting piece 21 securely in a locked state within the main body 20 of the plug, which prevents easy dislodgement into or out of the main body 20.

Thus, the present invention provides a solution to difficulties which one experiences with a stopcock as described in the Akui et al. reference.

As the Akui et al. reference does not disclose all of the limitations recited in Claim 1, the Applicant respectfully requests the withdrawal of the anticipation rejection of Claim 1.

The dependent claims are considered allowable for the reasons advanced for Claim 1 from which they depend. These claims are further considered allowable as they recite other features of the invention that are neither disclosed nor suggested by the applied references when those features are considered within the context of Claim 1.

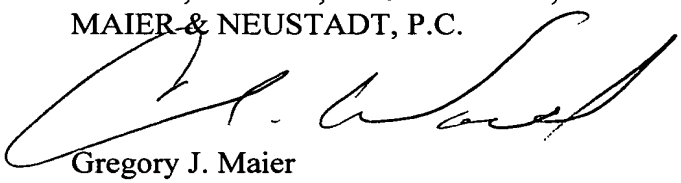
Newly added Claim 11 recites features that are not disclose din the art of record. For example, Claim 11 advantageously recites a valved plug comprising, among other features, a main body portion, and a nesting piece, wherein the main body portion is provided with an interlocking inward projection of a predetermined thickness, and wherein the nesting piece is provided with an interlocking groove around an outer periphery thereof. The interlocking groove is defined as being narrower than the predetermined thickness of the interlocking projection and adapted to engage with the interlocking projection tightly from upper, lower and inner sides to hold the interlocking projection in a compressed state. Thus, Claim 11 is

believed to be in condition for allowance.

Consequently, in view of the above discussion, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for formal allowance and an early and favorable reconsideration of this application is therefore requested.

Respectfully Submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Gregory J. Maier
Registration No. 25,599
Attorney of Record

Christopher D. Ward
Registration No. 41,367

Customer Number
22850
Tel. (703) 413-3000
Fax. (703) 413-2220
(OSMMN 10/01)

GJM:CDW:brf
I:\atty\cdw\24xxxx\244334US3\am1.doc